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S E R M O N,

PREACHED AT ABINGDON, BERKS,

OCTOBER 7, 1781.

BY THE REV. JOHN NEAL LAKE, M.A.

ENTITLED,

Infant Baptism a Reasonable and Scriptural Service.

IN A

LETTER to the AUTHOR.

BY DANIEL TURNER, M.A.

I also will shew my Opinion.

ELIHU.

Negat Scriptura, quod non notat.

TERTUL. MONOGAM.

L O N D O N :

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S. E. R. M. O. N.

IN THE CITY OF LONDON

OCTOBER 7, 1851.

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LETTER TO THE AUTHOR

BY DANIEL TURNER, M.A.

Printed by J. G. & Co. Stationers, 10, Abchurch Lane, London, E.C. 4.

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Printed by J. G. & Co. Stationers, 10, Abchurch Lane, London, E.C. 4.
and by every Stationer in England.

REMARKS, &c.

REVEREND SIR,

WHEN you obliged me with a Copy of your printed Sermon upon *Infant Baptism*, you desired me to make some Observations upon it, which I promised you I would, as I had Opportunity; accordingly I have here collected a few of them, and offer them to your serious and candid Consideration, and to that of the Public: Though, as to the latter, sorely against my Inclination, from the great Aversion I have to religious Controversy, where the Essentials of Religion are not concerned; and more especially on a Subject so hackneyed and worn to the very Bone as this has long been; but it appeared to me necessary, for my own and my People's Vindication, and for the Support of the Truth, that I should make my Observations as public as your Sermon. However, I trust, you will find, that I have treated you with the Respect due to your Character as a Christian Minister, and with all the Tendernefs and Faithfulness that true Christian Friendship dictates. This, I assure you, is what I have sincerely aimed at.

I propose to remark first on the *Spirit and Temper* of your Sermon, and then on your *Argument*.

I begin with your *Title and Advertisement*. Your *Title* — “ *Infant Baptism a Reasonable and Scriptural Service* : ” — This is boldly said however,

and for that Reason only *may pass* for Truth. Some People, when they hear a Man, especially one whom they esteem as a *good Man*, assert a Thing with an Air of decisive Confidence, look upon it as proved beyond all Doubt; at least it disposes the Mind to be satisfied with the mere Shadow of Argument; though this will not be the Case with *all* your Readers, myself for one. For, how can I believe that to be a *scriptural Service*, about which the Scripture says not one Word? But more of this hereafter.

In your *Advertisement*, you tell us, Infant Baptism “ is a Truth *ill* understood by some, and unreasonably opposed and rejected by others.” I am somewhat at a Loss for your Meaning here, my good Friend; is it that some of your own People do not understand, that Infant Baptism is a *reasonable* and *scriptural Service*? And that, therefore, you thought it your Duty to instruct them better? Who can blame you? Or do you mean that we, Antipædobaptists, do not understand it? In this you are right. However, for my Part I readily acknowledge that after the most diligent Enquiry into this Subject for many Years; and after reading and considering what even *you* have said, who seem to be so exceedingly clear and positive in it, I *cannot* understand it as a *scriptural Service*, consequently not a *reasonable* one. And, therefore, I also acknowledge that I *oppose* and *reject* it, whenever it comes in my Way, though I never impertinently seek after any Occasion for doing so. And where is the *Unreasonableness* of this Conduct, provided I do it decently, and with Candour? Is it unreasonable for a Christian to *oppose* and *reject* what is proposed to him under the Idea of a sacred Ordinance

nance of JESUS CHRIST, when he cannot, were it for his Life, find that JESUS CHRIST has said any Thing about it in his Book ?

You profess a *Wish to cultivate a due Esteem and Affection towards* SOME of us. And tell us, that you are *happy in the mutual Harmony that has subsisted between your worthy Brethren in the Ministry at ABINGDON, and yourself, and that you hope it will ever continue.*

This mutual Harmony is a Matter on which I have always set my Heart, and most earnestly wish to cultivate amongst all Christians, and especially at *Abingdon*; and, I thank GOD, I have had the pleasing Satisfaction of living in the most friendly Unity and Peace, for more than thirty Years, with your Predecessors in the Ministry of that Congregation over which you preside, and likewise with the Members of that Congregation themselves; who, I am confident, will readily testify, that I have always endeavoured, with the most *disinterested* Zeal, to promote their Peace and Prosperity; while I as readily acknowledge, with Heart-felt Gratitude and Delight, their affectionate Regards to me in Return: And I ardently wish for the Continuance of this truly Christian Temper; but I am afraid the Publication of this Sermon of yours will have a contrary Effect. God grant my Fears may prove to be groundless!

I readily acknowledge that you have a Right to publish your own Sentiments upon any religious Subject, and consequently upon this: But all Things that are *lawful*, are not always *expedient*. You might have *preached* upon this Subject to your People, as often as you pleased, as we do our Sentiments about it, to ours, upon the Administration of the Ordinance; and all very well. But

now you step forth in hostile Array, proclaim open War against us, and set us at Defiance, it is quite another Thing; and our Neighbours will be ready to think, that you mean to triumph in our Silence as a Token of Victory, or provoke us to a Contest dangerous to the delightful Harmony that has so long subsisted here; I hope not, indeed, between you and me; but, however, between some of our People, who have hitherto, on both Sides, maintained it very much to their mutual Honour and Satisfaction. For it is natural to suppose, that some of your People will boast of the mighty Strength and Clearness of your Arguments; some of mine will be ready to tell them, they are exceedingly weak, obscure, unconvincing. This will make your People angry, and provoke them to call hard Names, and load us with Reproaches: Some of the more zealous and irritable amongst mine will, I fear, be too ready to return the Compliment: And so on, 'till both Parties are fixed in an irreconcilable Aversion and Hatred to each other, to the Shame of their Christian Profession.

Should this be the Case, it would grieve me exceedingly. It would *always* have done so, but much more *now* in my old Age, to which the Balm of Peace is so peculiarly soothing and delightful.

And if these Remarks of mine, though as gentle as Faithfulness would permit, should, instead of *convincing* (as is not likely) *provoke* you to reply, some of my Brethren (for it is too late in Life for me to think of carrying on such a Controversy as this) would very probably reply again; this would produce from you a Rejoinder, and so on, till, weary of Wrangling, you both sit down more confident
than

than ever in the Rectitude of your respective Opinions, but not one Jot the *better Christians*; nor more under the governing Power of that CHARITY, without which all the most zealous Sticklings for Party Notions are nothing, and less than nothing, and Vanity.

The only good Effect that I can think your Sermon likely to produce is—that some of the less prejudiced, and more judicious and thoughtful amongst your People, who sincerely wish to know the plain simple Truth, will be led to examine the Subject in Dispute more attentively, and resolving to be guided entirely by *the clear, express, uninvolved Language of Scripture*, instead of *uncertain and fallible Consequences*, will be induced to embrace *our* Opinion, and thus add to the Number of those who *oppose and reject* Infant Baptism, as not being found to be a *scriptural* Service. I have known this to have been the Effect in the like Case, many a Time.

I am sorry to observe, as I go into your Sermon, that there is not so much Fairness and Candour in it as I expected from *you*. You have not, indeed, broke out into those very foul and violent Invectives, with which we are too often abused, by some Pædobaptists; but, through the Greatness of your *youthful Zeal*, you have been led into some harsh Expressions, and Modes of representing us, which I will note before I come more particularly to your Text and Argument.

You tell us, Page 4th, “ The Slight and Con-tempt which many *pour* on such a Service (i. e. “ Infant Baptism) appears to be too much like “ being wiser than God.” When the Reader considers that your Sermon was preached at *Abingdon*,

will he not think, that either my Friends here, or myself, had treated *your* Idea of Christian Baptism, with the most abundant Contempt—even *poured* it out upon it? I am sure, however, that *I* know of no such Thing. I would not treat with the Shadow of Contempt any Opinion, however erroneous it might be, that any serious Christian embraces for Truth, from a Principle of Conscience. And then, to represent us as affecting to *appear wiser than God!* Does it, my Dear Sir, look like appearing *wiser than God*, conscientiously, and in Spite of all the Reproaches and hard Names we receive from the World, to follow the plain Dictates of his blessed Word, and not dare to venture any farther in the solemn Business of *instituted Worship*, than that Word *expressly* and *indubitably* Warrants? Did we go farther, and substitute *Scripture Consequences* drawn from it by our own *fallible Reasonings*, in the room of Scripture *Precept* and *Example*, you might cast such a Reflection upon us and welcome, if it would be any Satisfaction to you; though I will not cast it upon you, because I believe you think and judge upon the same Principle as I do; that is to say, a conscientious Regard to what *you apprehend* to be Truth.—You add, “ I cannot but “ consider it (i. e. rejecting Infant Baptism) as an “ unwarrantable Attempt to contract the Plan of “ Divine Grace and Mercy.” You mean, I suppose, contract *our Ideas* of that Plan. But here you mistake the Matter exceedingly; for our Doctrine most certainly enlarges our Views of the Plan of Divine Grace and Mercy, far beyond yours. Even those of the Calvinistical Persuasion amongst us, include *all elect Infants* in the Covenant of Grace, whether born of believing or Heathen Parents; And

And others of us consider *all Mankind*, with their Infant Offspring, *so far* under the New Covenant, as that none perish everlastingly but for their *own actual personal Sin*: whereas, you confine your Idea of Covenant Interest to the Seed of *Believers ONLY*. This Charge against us therefore is by no Means just: You farther add, “That our Opinion has
 “ this evil Tendency, to keep back Christian Pa-
 “ rents from a Duty they owe their Offspring, and to
 “ prevent their taking the Encouragement of God’s
 “ gracious Promise made to them and their Seed.” This would be lamentable indeed were it really the Case, but happily for us it is not. *Where there is no Law there is no Transgression*. Now, certain it is, we can find no Law in this Case, not one Word in the Bible, which is our Rule, enjoining it as a Duty to baptize, or even *sprinkle*, our Infant Offspring; how then do we keep back Christian Parents from a Duty they owe their Offspring? This is beyond my shallow Comprehension. Nor can I see that our Principles tend to *prevent Christian Parents from taking all the Encouragement*, that the Promises of the Gospel are designed to give them. We find no Promises annexed to the *Baptism* of our Infants, in particular. All the rest we take for our Encouragement in the Discharge of our Duty to them, just as you do, in Proportion to the Strength of our Faith, (*viz.*) we solemnly commit them to God, we implore his Acceptance and Mercy in CHRIST; and as they grow up, we pray with them, as well as for them, and endeavour to bring them acquainted with the Christian Doctrine, and Way of Salvation, with as much Care and Diligence, as if they had been baptized; encourage them to repent, and believe the Gospel, and devote themselves to
 CHRIST,

CHRIST, as his Disciples; assuring them, this Way, of eternal Life, according to the Divine Promise. And what more can you do? Or is there any Promise made to the Pædobaptists, and their Offspring, that is not made to us and ours also? I cannot find any.—You there also represent our Opinion, as *leading Persons to renounce their Obligations to Holiness, resulting from their having been baptized into CHRIST, in their Infancy.* I reply, not at all: For, when any sprinkled in their Infancy, arrive at Years of Discretion, and feel any Obligations to Holiness arising from *such* Baptism, we leave them to their own Judgment and Conduct: But, if they happen to be convinced that *such* Baptism is not the Baptism which CHRIST has instituted in his Church, and consequently feel no Obligations to Holiness from thence, as being something done without their Knowledge and Consent:—And, at the same Time also, see it their Duty to devote themselves to Christ by this solemn Ordinance, as their own *Act and Deed*, and thereby give *real* Weight to their Obligations to Holiness, surely they ought to do so; and we may very properly encourage them in it, so far as they come in our Way. We can conceive of no religious Obligation that a *rational Creature* can be said to be properly under, 'till he is capable of knowing what such Obligation is; and, therefore, in the Case before us, if I really believe, that what my pious and well-meaning Parents did for me in my Infancy, under the Idea of an *Institution of CHRIST* is NOT an *Institution* of Christ, but a mere human Invention, or at best a religious Error, ought I not, if I mean to be religious in Earnest, and obey my Saviour, to make my Devotion to him, my *own Act and Deed*, in the very Way I believe

believe in my Conscience he has pointed out to me in his Word? Certainly I ought. And all this *may* be done, and usually *is done*, without any formal Renunciation of the former supposed Baptism. You farther add “from the same Mistake they have “submitted to be *rebaptized*, though we are assured there is but *one Baptism*, and that this is an “Ordinance never to be repeated on the Subject “who has once received it.”

We agree with you, my Dear Sir, that there is but *one Baptism*, and that that one Baptism, ought not to be repeated on the same Subject; nor did I ever know an Instance of it. We abhor the Idea. And, therefore, here also you have misrepresented us, through a Mistake of *your own*. Which leads me to take Notice of what you say to the same Purpose (Page 16) where, in a Note upon these Words “as “they, who call themselves Baptists, say,”—You add at the Bottom of the Page,—“I cannot approve “of the Term *Baptists*, assumed by those who reject Infant Baptism, as meant to insinuate that “*they only* have Christian Baptism. In consistency “with my Principles, I must consider the Word “*Anabaptists*, or *Rebaptizers*, to be their just Title “and Description, which, therefore, I take the “Liberty of Using, without meaning to convey “any *unjust* Reflection on our Brethren who differ “from us.”

Here, my good Friend, your Zeal for your Cause has exceedingly out run your Candour, and you seem indeed to be angry. Some People would be apt to think, that feeling your Want of sufficient Argument, you meant to avail yourself of the pitiful Aid of loading us with reproachful Epithets, and of setting us in a contemptible and disgustful Light;

Light; a very common Practice with our Opponents. But you should know, Sir, that we call ourselves *Baptists* for the very same Reason that *John*, the Forerunner of *Christ*, is called *the Baptist*; that is, because we do, as he did, administer that Ordinance by *Immersion*, not *Sprinkling*. For how would you translate the Word *Immersion* into Greek? Certainly by the Word *βαπτισμος* *Baptism*; and not by *ἐκκρίσμος* *Rhantism* or *Sprinkling*. Nor would you call *John* the *Baptist*, *John* the *Rhantist* or *Sprinkler*. But why not, if you really think he administered the Ordinance by *Aspersion* or *Sprinkling*? It looks invidious to stigmatize a Body of Conscientious Christians, with ignominious Names, grounded upon Principles which they deny, which are the Matter in Dispute, and are yet to be proved. You tell us, indeed, that you take this *Liberty*, without meaning to convey any unjust Reflection upon us. But what then, my good Friend, could you mean? Some of your Readers will be ready to think you meant to Prejudice their Minds against us, as a bad Sort of People at best; others will consider you as holding us up to the Eye of the Public as dangerous Heretics, Profaners of Sacred Ordinances, a Kind of Monsters in Religion. For these are the Ideas that are usually excited in the Minds of the Unthinking Many, by what you call our *just Title and Description*. But, however consistent this may be with your Principles, I am sure it is very inconsistent with that *Brotherly Kindness and Charity*, you profess to have for us. And, therefore, from the good Opinion I still entertain of you, I am willing to believe, that you did not mean to set us in a Light so extremely offensive; but this is the natural Tendency of what you have said, and this, no doubt, will

will be the Effect on the Minds of too many ; and therefore I hope you will, for your own Sake, wish it unsaid.

Might I not, upon the same Ground, and with equal Justice, cavil with your Party for calling themselves *Pædobaptists*, and add by Way of Note ; *I cannot approve of the Term Pædobaptists, assumed by those who only SPRINKLE Infants, as meant to insinuate, that theirs is true Christian Baptism, tho' NO BAPTISM AT ALL ;* and then, marking them with ignominious Epithets, to render them contemptible (which might be easily done) say, it is their *just Title and Description* ? No, Sir, I should be ashamed of taking such a *Liberty*, however, consistently with my Principles it might be done ; not only because it would be begging the Question, but also because it would discover a mean, illiberal, bigotted Spirit, quite inconsistent with the Christian Character, and that Forbearance and Charity, which is it's chief Glory ; and in short would be telling the World, that I set up for Infallibility. I was in Hopes, that this Note, on which I have been animadverting, might have slipt from you unawares, just at the Moment your Mind took Fire at the Idea of our styling ourselves *Baptists* ; and yet I find you again at the same Business of invidious Party Distinctions, (p. 25) *Anabaptists* in Italics, that the Reader might be sure to Notice it ; and again (p. 31) where you talk of *renouncing Infant Baptism* in order to be *anabaptized* : and the more effectually to terrify your Readers, and inflame their Zeal against *such Anabaptists*, you represent them as guilty of the shocking Sin, of *breaking the Seal of God's Covenant* ! But what has been said above is a sufficient Reply to these severe Reflections. I shall therefore only add, that
I am

I am utterly at a Loss to understand how the conscientiously correcting any apprehended Mistake, about a supposed Covenant with God, in which they had no actual Personal Part; and solemnly entering into a *real* Covenant with him in their *own* Persons, and as their *own* Act and Deed, I say, I am at a Loss to understand how this can be deemed a Violation of any Covenant Engagement with God; nor can I think, that the Heart-searching, and most Gracious Being will judge it so.

Having thus far noted the *Spirit* and *Temper* of your Sermon, I come now, Sir, to make some Observations on your *Argument*, which appears to me no Way convincing or satisfactory; and every Part of which has, in my Apprehension, been confuted again and again. This shews how impossible it is, in the present State of Imperfection, for the sincerest Christians to see Things in the same Light; and how necessary it is, that they should never lose Sight of their own Fallibility, and to *forbear one another in Love*. And indeed, upon this worn-out Subject, it is scarcely worth while to trouble the Public with our Arguments *pro* and *con*. It is tired of us. However if there should, at any Time, appear a Necessity for arguing upon it, we should keep purely to the Argument, and forbear all *Invectives*; "Christians," (says a worthy Divine of the established Church) "should be invited, by every conciliating Measure, to join in one Profession; all *invidious Distinctions*, all unnecessary Impediments should be removed; smaller Differences should be dropt by all Parties, provided that in greater things they can be made to agree;"* what an Excellent Spirit breathes here!

* The Rev. J. Sturges's Considerations on the Present State of the Church Establishment, p. 27.

Would to God it was every where possessed in the Fulness of it's Power !

But to the Matter proposed : — I begin with your Text, Act ii. 39. For the *Promise* is unto you and your *Children*, and to all that are afar off ; even to as many as the Lord our God shall call. I should think it scarcely possible for any unprejudiced Mind to find Infant Baptism in this Text. That learned and judicious Commentator, Dr. Whitby, Dean of Sarum, says expressly, “ These Words will not “ prove a Right of Infants to receive Baptism.” Yet the Doctor was a Pædobaptist. — Dr. Doddridge, another learned and excellent Pædobaptist Commentator, gives them a very different Sense, in his Paraphrase in his Family Expofitor ; and, in in a Note, only says, “ If the Promise could be “ taken in a greater Latitude, it would, he thinks, “ favour Infant Baptism.” You take for granted here what ought to have been proved, and what appears to me impossible to be proved : That is, first, that the Word *Children* must necessarily mean *Infants* ; which there is nothing either in the Text or Context to lead us to conclude it does. It very often means *Offspring in general*, and such as are arrived at Years of Discretion, as John viii. 39. — Where our Lord says to the Jews, If ye were Abraham's Children. And Acts xiii. 33. where the Apostle says, “ that the Promise made unto their “ Fathers, was fulfilled unto us their *Children*.” That is, the Apostle, and those who heard him. In (p. 8.) you call this a Perversion of the Text ; and (p. 9.) labour to prove it so ; but all you say there agrees as well with my Sense as yours ; for you have not there proved the *Children*, to whom the

the Promise was made, were *Infants*. It only proves, what I allow, that the Gentile Christians had the same Right to the Gospel Promises as the Jews had. But it does not necessarily follow that because the *Infants* of the former were *circumcised*, by the express Command of God, those of the latter must be baptized *without* any such Command. Nor does it follow as you argue (p. 10.) that because the *Infants* of *Abraham's* natural Seed were circumcised, therefore the *Infants* of his spiritual Seed are to be baptized. This is mere Presumption. Then, *Secondly*, you take it for granted, without any Shadow of Proof, that I can find, that the Word *Promise* in the Text means the *Covenant of Circumcision* made with *Abraham*, whereas here is nothing said in the Text or Context about *Abraham*, or his *Covenant*. But the *Promise* here evidently refers to what the Apostle had quoted from the Prophet *Joel*, relative to the abundant Grace, and extraordinary Gifts of the *Holy Spirit*, which should distinguish the Days of the *Messiah*, the First-Fruits of which they then saw and heard. Upon this Ground the Apostle calls them to repent, and give themselves up to JESUS CHRIST, by Baptism; assuring them, that this Way, *they* should also receive the *Gift of the Holy Ghost*. And then adds: *For the Promise is to you, and your Children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.* That is, effectually call to such Repentance, and Subjection to CHRIST, even amongst the Gentiles, as well as you of the Children of Israel. Now it is evident from this View of the Text, which is plain and natural, that the *Promise* here, whatever may be particularly meant by it, had no more Reference to *Abraham's Covenant*,

nant, than to the Covenant with *David*, who is mentioned in the Context, or, indeed, to that with *Noah*, or any other of the patriarchal Believers. And it is also evident that the Word *Children* refers to such adult Persons, as were capable of attending to, and obeying the divine Call, of repenting and devoting themselves to CHRIST, as his Disciples. And, consequently, here is nothing in any Part, or the Whole of the Text, or Context, to prove *Infant Baptism* a *Scriptural Service*.

You, indeed, roundly assert (p. 6.) that when the Apostle says, The Promise is to you and your Children—"It is as much as if he had said, in "this Way, (viz. of Repentance and Baptism) "you may hope for the Divine Blessing on yourselves and your Offspring, for the Promise of "God's Covenant, of which Baptism is the Seal, "as Circumcision was formerly, belongs to you "and your Children."—But is there any Thing in the Text or Context, that warrants your putting such Expressions into the Apostle's Mouth? Is there a Word about *Baptism's* being a *Seal* of any Covenant, or of *Circumcision* being so formerly? Or of any Connection between them? If we may take such Liberties as these with the Scripture, we may prove *Transubstantiation*, *Purgatory*, the *Worship of Saints*, and all the Romish Trumpery, to be *Scriptural Service*. In short, Sir, the Work you are engaged in appears to me a very difficult Business. For, observe, you engage to prove a *positive Institution* of CHRIST which, in the very Nature of the Thing, requires a *positive Command*, or *clear express Declaration* and Appointment from him; I say, you engage to prove this by *Scriptural Consequences*. Don't this carry Absurdity in the very Face of it?

To me it does. And then the Medium which you take for this Purpose, The Covenant with *Abraham*, is the worst and most untoward of all, in my Opinion. For here I can see nothing but a confused Huddle of heterogeneous Ideas, some *Jewish*, some *Christian*, from which no rational Conclusion, or just Scriptural Consequence can be drawn. This may be owing to the Imperfection of my mental Sight, indeed; but so it appears to me.

I readily allow that the Infants of Believing Parents are interested in the Covenant of Grace, so far as to enjoy the external Privileges of it, or Means of Grace, and that these Privileges are great and valuable. You cannot consistently go any farther, though you sometimes attempt it, when your Argument seems to require it. But the Point you are to prove is, that *this Interest gives such Infants* a clear indubitable Right to Christian Baptism. And to this End (and upon the Ground you take) you must prove these two Things, which you only assert, (see p. 19.) viz. First, That the *Covenant of Circumcision*, made with *Abraham* (and enlarged under *Moses*) is the *very same Covenant of Grace* which all Believing Christians are now under.

Secondly, That *Baptism* stands now in the Place of *Circumcision*, as the *Seal of this Covenant*, and therefore to be applied to Christian Infants. But here, my good Friend, I think you miserably fail; you talk, indeed, a great deal about it, and about it, from p. 10th to p. 18th especially, and there raise such a Dust as will, no doubt, blind the Eyes of some of your incautious Readers, while with your powerful Declamation, and bold positive Assertions, you drive them into your Conclusion, before

before they are aware, or know any Thing at all how they got there.

But let us examine the Matter a little.

First, You are to prove that the *Jewish Covenant of Circumcision* made with *Abraham*, is the *very same Covenant of Grace*, which Christian Believers are now under. I say the *Covenant of Circumcision* with *Abraham*, particularly ; because, as to the *Covenant of Grace* itself, simply considered, or as exhibited to *Adam* after the Fall, or to *Noah*, *Job*, or any other of the believing Patriarchs, you say nothing. And no Wonder ; for here we read nothing about *Infant Interest*, or of any *Seal* to be applied to them which are so very necessary to your Purpose *. But to *this Covenant* you stick close, as your *main Support*, and yet, upon a candid deliberate View of the History, I am persuaded it must appear, to every unprejudiced Mind, That this *Covenant with Abraham*, whatever gracious Promises may be occasionally mentioned, or typically held forth in it, is NOT properly the *Covenant of Grace*, made with all Believers, and which believing Christians are now under ; no, but a Kind of *Appendix* to it, or a par-

* You will tell me, perhaps, you fix upon this *Covenant with Abraham*, because the Apostle *Paul* says so much about *Abraham* and his Seed, and of Christians and their Seed, as the Children of *Abraham* ; and of the *Blessing of Abraham* coming upon them, &c. But remember, the Apostle, in those Places, is not arguing about Baptism, or the Right of *Infants* to it, or their Interest in the *Covenant* ; but about our Justification ; shewing that it is not by the Law, to which Circumcision was the Sign of Subjection, but by Faith ; because, even *Abraham* himself was justified by Faith, before he was circumcised, and the *Covenant* we are under being the same gracious *Covenant* he was under, before this of Circumcision took Place, therefore we must be justified by Faith.

ticular and extraordinary Stipulation with Abraham and his Posterity and peculiar to them. This appears,

First, From the peculiar Promises and Declarations made in it; such as, that they should be separated from all the rest of the World as God's *peculiar People*; should be as the Sand of the Sea for Multitude; possess the Land of Canaan, under his gracious Protection and Government, as *their KING and their GOD*, as long as obedient to him; and that the MESSIAH, in whom *all the Nations of the Earth should be blessed*, should be one of their Nation.

Secondly. The Covenant of Circumcision was a Covenant of Bondage; a Yoke, says the Apostle, that *neither we nor our Fathers were able to bear*; but the Covenant of Grace is a Covenant of glorious Liberty to all that are under it.

Thirdly. The peculiar Promises of the Covenant of Circumcision were *confined to Abraham and his Family*, and those incorporated with them; but the Promises of the Covenant of Grace, *extend to all Believers*, of every Age and Nation.

Fourthly. The Language of the peculiar Covenant made with Abraham was, *do this and thou shalt live, and dwell in the Land which the Lord thy God giveth thee*. But the Language of the Covenant of Grace is,—*The Just shall live by Faith; by Grace are ye saved*.

Fifthly. The Covenant of Grace, is an everlasting Covenant; but *this of Circumcision merely temporary*, or for a Time only, and designed to answer some particular Ends in the Course of divine Providence, which are now answered; the Covenant itself, therefore, *set aside*, and Circumcision, the supposed Seal of it, *utterly abolished by divine Authority*. And accordingly, when God Promises the special Blessings

sings of the *Covenant of Grace*, even to these People themselves, and as it should be administered in the Days of the *Messiah*, he says, *Jer. xxxi. 31. Behold, the Days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a NEW COVENANT with the House of Israel, and will write my Law in their Hearts, &c.* And from hence the Apostle observes, *Heb. viii. 13. In that he saith a NEW COVENANT, he hath made the first Old, &c.* Here then, surely, there can be no solid Ground to build Infant Baptism upon. Because the Infants of *Abraham's* Posterity, were interested in this *peculiar Covenant*, and were *circumcised*; does it follow, *necessarily*, that the Infants of Christian Believers are interested in the *Covenant of Grace*, which is *quite another Covenant*, and must be baptized? I can see no Connection between the two Ideas. And yet thus you Reason. But you are also,

Secondly, To prove that Baptism stands *now* in the Room of Circumcision *formerly*, as a *Seal of Interest in the Covenant of Grace*, and therefore to be applied to the Infant Offspring of believing Christians. But observe,

First, Circumcision itself is no where called the *Seal of Interest in the Covenant of Grace*, nor used as such, but was peculiar to the *particular Covenant* with *Abraham* and his Family, and those incorporated with them, and *them only*; accordingly none of the believing Patriarchs, besides *Abraham*, were ordered to be circumcised. No, not even righteous *Lot*, *Abraham's* near Kinsman. But Baptism is to be administered to all that profess Faith in *CHRIST*, and Obedience to his Gospel. Nor is Baptism any where in the Bible called a *Seal* of the *Covenant of Grace*. We read of Believers being

sealed with the Holy Spirit, Ephes. i. 13, but never with Baptism.

Secondly, Circumcision was rather a *family, or political* Affair, than a religious Rite; and therefore performed by the Prince, or the Parent, or their Deputy *; not by the Priest as such: But Baptism is a Rite *purely Religious*; and (usually) performed by some Officer in the Church.

Thirdly, If Circumcision sealed an Interest in the Covenant of Grace, as you say, what Occasion was there to baptize such as had been circumcised? Were two Seals necessary to the same Covenant? Or, rather, does it not shew, that Circumcision and Baptism, belong respectively to two very different Covenants?

Fourthly, Circumcision was a Yoke of Bondage obliging to an intire Observance of the Law of *Moses*; Baptism a Token of full Deliverance from it.

Fifthly, Circumcision was a Wall of *Separation* between *Jew* and *Gentile*; Baptism a Sign of its being broken down. Is it likely then that these, so widely different Ordinances, should be Seals of Interest in the *same* Covenant, and the one stand in the room of the other?

Sixthly, But let the Agreement between Baptism and Circumcision be just what you please, there is this essential Difference still between them intirely destructive of your whole Argument; that is to say, That Circumcision was expressly appointed by God himself, to be applied to Infants in Abraham's Covenant; whereas there is no such Appointment respecting Baptism. In short, there is nothing that I

* See Gen. xvii. 23. Josh. v. 2, 3, &c. Vitring. Sac. Obser. p. 397.—400. Wits. Econ. Fœd. l. iv. c. viii. sect. xiii.

can find in the Bible, that gives the least Countenance to the Idea of *Baptism's* standing in the Place of *Circumcision* as a *Seal* of Interest in the Covenant of Grace*. Your Argument, therefore, set in its just Light, and expressed in plain Words, seems to me to stand thus :

The Posterity of *Abraham* circumcised their Infant Offspring by the *express Command* of God ; therefore Christian Believers ought to baptize theirs *without any Command from God* at all ! What kind of Logic is this ! Were I to assert, that because the Infant Seed of *Abraham* had a Right to possess the Land of *Canaan*, therefore the Infant Offspring of Christian Believers, *being in the same Covenant*, have a Right to possess the Land of *Canaan* ; would not this be as good Reasoning as yours ? — But here you refer us to Col. ii. 11. where the Apostle happens to mention *Circumcision* and *Baptism* nearly together ; or, as you express it, *compares* them together. But mentioning, or even *comparing* two Things together, does not prove them alike, or that one may supply the Place of the other. Nor does the Apostle *compare* Baptism and Circumcision together here ; or say any Thing of the former as standing in the Place of the latter. The *Comparison* lies between the *Circumcision* of the *Flesh* and that of the *Heart*. He tells the *Colossians*, that they are *complete in CHRIST* ; being *circumcised*, that is, renewed and sanctified in their Hearts, by a Circumcision *made without Hands*, i. e. by the gracious Power of his Doctrine and Spirit. Here then, it is evident, the Comparison lies between the *Circumcision* in the *Flesh*, made with *Hands*, and the *Cir-*

* Circumcision is called the Seal of *Abraham's* Faith, but Baptism is no where in the Bible called the Seal of any one's Faith.

cumcision or *Sanctification* of the Heart, made *without Hands*; and not between *Circumcision* and *Baptism*, for *Baptism* is not done without Hands; and thus the Apostle argues, that they are complete in CHRIST, and stand in no Need of the Law of *Circumcision*; and then observes, all this is set forth in a lively and striking Light, and strongly signified by their being *baptized into CHRIST*; for q. d. “ you thereby most expressly declare, that “ you consider *Circumcision*, and the whole Ritual “ of *Moses*, as DEAD AND BURIED with CHRIST.” This every unprejudiced Reader of Understanding will perceive to be the Apostle’s Meaning, by considering the Whole together. Here then is nothing tending to prove that *Baptism* stands now in the Room of *Circumcision*, but just the contrary; and that Christian *Baptism* denotes the entire *Abolition of Circumcision*, and the Covenant, or Law to which it was annexed; and, consequently, that *Baptism* depends upon, and belongs to an entirely new Dispensation, or Constitution of Things, wherein *Infants* are not so much as *once* mentioned as the Subjects of it.

Thus, in my Judgment, you fail in your demonstrating Infant-Baptism to be a *Scriptural Service*, by not proving that the Covenant of *Circumcision*, and the Christian Covenant, are the *same* Covenant of Grace; and that *Baptism* stands now in the Room of *Circumcision*; and yet these are, what you call, *strong Grounds, and Chains of Proof*, in Page 19. You, indeed, in that Page assert, “ That God’s “ Covenant Promise is still the SAME, including “ Believers and their Seed—That *Baptism* seals the “ *same Promise* now, as *Circumcision* did formerly.” “ That the Privileges of this Covenant Relation “ have

“ have never been repealed.” And elsewhere to the same Purpose. But *Affertion*, my dear Sir, is one Thing and *Proof* another. And nothing can well be more evident than that the *Jewish Covenant of Circumcision*, on which your *Affertion* depends, and the *Covenant of Grace* we are under, are as different as any two Things can well be.

Besides all this, the Uncertainty of your Idea of *this Covenant of yours*, and of the Manner of coming at an Interest in it, renders your whole Argument at best, very dark and inconclusive.

First, Do you mean by it the Covenant of Grace *strictly*, and *unconditionally* taken; or, as absolutely insuring Grace and Glory to *all the Elect*, and to THEM ONLY, according to the common Calvinistical Notion of it? If so, then Baptism should be administered ONLY to the elect Number; and which they are you ought to know before you apply the *Baptismal Seal*, or else apply it at Random; and too often to such as have no Right to it.

Secondly, Or do you mean the Covenant of Grace *conditionally* taken, viz. as requiring *Faith* and *Repentance*? Then you cannot consistently apply the Seal of Interest to *any* but such as *profess Repentance and Faith*; which Infants are not capable of.

Thirdly, But if you mean only the *outward Dispensation* of the Covenant of Grace, which extends to ALL Mankind, at least where the Gospel is preached; then you should apply your Seal of Baptism TO ALL the Infants offered to you for the Purpose, whether their Parents are real Believers or not, if they say they are Christians, though ever so debauched and wicked in their Lives*; yea,

* This is the Practice of the Clergy of the established Church, in which they are far more consistent than dissenting Pædobaptists.
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the Infants of Heathens, provided they would suffer them to enjoy a Christian Education. But this, as a Calvinist, you cannot do; and, indeed, throughout your whole Discourse you appear to confine your Idea of *that Covenant Interest* which gives a *Right* to Baptism, to the Infants of *serious believing Parents ONLY*. Yet what Degree of the Parents Faith is necessary to interest the Child in this Covenant, and what the particular Blessings conveyed by it, and sealed by Baptism are, I have never yet been able to learn. For some of our Pædobaptist Brethren say one Thing, some another. The Sum, however, seems to be this, That there are certain *Covenant Promises*, which God has made to Believers and their Offspring, in which they are both interested; that these Promises convey *special* saving Grace to the Elect; and *common* Grace, i. e. such as is common to God's visible Church, to others; and that this respective Grace is *sealed to them respectively by Baptism*. But, in order to make this out, We must return to the Covenant of Circumcision made with *Abraham*, and its supposed Seal, which, after all, does not, as I have shewn, appear to be the Covenant of Grace common to all Believers, but a *peculiar Stipulation*; and this Consideration itself is sufficient to destroy the whole Force of the Reasoning. And then, the Idea of Baptism's being instituted as a *Seal* to the Covenant of Grace, is not agreeable to the Scripture Account of it, and therefore we reject it. Baptism is doubtless a Mean of Grace to the Subjects of it, *so far as they* are led by it to exercise their Faith in a *once dead and buried, but now risen Saviour*, for the Remission of their Sins, and as a *Taken of their Subjection to him, and Obligations* of

of walking in Newness of Life. And so far, but no farther, the Grace promised in the New Covenant may be expected. Without Faith it is impossible to *please* God, nor will even the *Word Profit*, but as it is mixed with FAITH, in them that hear it. But, of the Parent's Faith, as conveying Grace, or giving a Right to Baptism, we read nothing in the Bible; and whatever Promises God has made in the Covenant of Grace to Believers, and how far soever their Seed may be interested in them, the Accomplishment of them does not depend upon *their* putting any Seal to them *without His Appointment*; but upon *His own* unchanging Truth and Faithfulness, and the *Sealing of his blessed Spirit in their Hearts*. All, therefore, that is said about the Privileges of Believers and their Seed in the Scriptures is admitted; and, that these Privileges are not *contracted*, but *enlarged* under the Christian Dispensation. But we still cannot see that this gives the Infant Offspring of Christian Believers a Right to Baptism, *without the express Appointment of CHRIST*. We are under a New Dispensation, wherein *old Things are done away, and all Things become New*; we should, therefore, naturally expect to hear of *New Institutions and Appointments* suited to them, by an *express Law of Christ*; and not be left to draw it out of an *old abolished* Dispensation, by our own uncertain Reasonings. In a Word, is it likely, that the All-wise Lawgiver in the Church should leave one, out of two, of the distinguishing Ordinances of his Gospel to be *guessed at*, or derived from a Set of suppositious Premises, by a Train of puzzling Arguments, and fallible Reasoning where we are liable to mistake in every Step? Is it not more rational to suppose

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he would appoint all *positive Institutions* in *clear and express Language*, such as the weakest honest Christian might understand? He did so in the Case of *Circumcision* under the darker Dispensation, surely then he would do the same in respect of *Baptism* under the brighter. But you tell us, (page 19.) "That we have a Command for Baptizing in the New Testament"—What! for baptizing Infants! Then our Dispute is over, and I am a Convert to Pædobaptism. But upon Enquiry, I find you have produced no such Command; and, indeed, you yourself sink this *New Testament Command*, at last, to a *clear Scriptural Consequence ONLY*; which however clear I am not able to discover. I know it has been said, that when our Lord says, *Go teach all Nations, baptizing them, &c.* if he had said, *circumcising them, the Disciples would have understood Infants as included.*—It is, I allow, very possible they might, had he not abolished the Old Covenant of Circumcision; but as he *did* abolish it, and opened a Dispensation entirely new, in its whole Form, they could not draw such an Inference, but would naturally expect his positive Orders about the Subjects of Baptism, which he really did give them, by telling them they should baptize *such as were taught and BELIEVED.* But (p. 20.) you tell us there is "*no Need of a Command in this Case.*" No Need of a Command in a Matter of *mere positive Institution!* How shall we know our Duty then? You say the very *Command to baptize, means it should be extended to Infants.* This will not do, my good Sir, you must turn us to Scripture Authority for thus extending the Command, or we cannot believe it.

Again,

Again, you tell us, "it is excessively unreasonable in us to deny Scriptural Consequences, as sufficient Proofs for Infant Baptism, who are so strenuous in pleading for the Mode of Immersion from Scriptural Deductions far less clear and decisive." I am astonished you should talk in this Manner! You know, that we do not lay the Weight of our Plea for Immersion upon *Scriptural Deductions*, but upon *express Scriptural Assertions*: We admit them, indeed, when clear and unembarrassed, though not in Points of positive Institution. You might as well say, that *Immersion* is sprinkling as that Baptism is so. When the Evangelist says, that CHRIST was baptized of *John in Jordan*, what Word could he have used more expressive of Immersion, than the Word *βαπτίζω*, which you know means to dip or immerse? You will say it signifies *Washing*. I grant it; but *such a Washing* as naturally and necessarily implies *Immersion*; you say sprinkling; but ask your Maid Servant, whether sprinkling your Linen be the same Thing as *Washing* it*? We have, indeed, lately had some daring Geniuses, such as your friend *Mr. Addington*, late of *Harborough*, and our Friend *Pentycrofs*, now of *Wallingford*, who venture to assert, that Christian Baptism was *always* performed by *Sprinkling*; by *Immersion* never. Though Multitudes of the most learned and pious amongst

* As for the Observation of the Lord's Day, which is the other Instance you produce of our depending on Scriptural Deductions; it is enough to say, that we have an *express Command* to keep holy *one Day* in seven; and the Apostolic Practice, grounded on that glorious Fact the Resurrection of CHRIST, for the Observance of the *first Day*. You can produce no such Evidence for Infant Sprinkling.

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the Pædobaptists themselves, both of the established Church and Dissenters, allow that Immersion was the Primitive Mode. Accordingly, this is known to be the Practice of the Greek Church to this Day; and the *Rubric* of the Church of England says, "*the Priest shall discreetly dip the Child.*" Yea, even Dr. Wall himself, Bishop Burnett, and many others of the Established Clergy, lament the Prevalence of the Mode of Sprinkling in their Church. With such Evidence as this before you, how could you say, that we depend on *Scriptural Deductions* for our Practice of Immersion? The original Word, and every Circumstance in the Scripture History of Baptism, demonstrates the contrary.

What you say (p. 20) about our *disfranchising God's free-born Subjects, depriving them of the Privileges and Blessings of this Covenant, &c.* by denying them Baptism, is all grounded upon your mistaken Notion of the Covenants, confounding the Idea of the Covenant of Grace itself, with that of Circumcision; for you suppose the Covenant of Circumcision gives the People of God greater Liberty, and invests them with larger Privileges, than the Covenant of Grace itself, and as it belongs to all Believers in general; whereas, the Scripture represents it as a Covenant of Bondage*, laying the peculiar Subjects of it, the Abrahamic Church, under peculiar and painful, though salutary and gracious Restraints, and Observances, 'till the Deliver should come out of Zion. He is now come, and set those Subjects themselves, as well as the Gentiles believing in Him, intirely free from that Yoke, bringing them into the glorious Liberty of the

* Acts xv. 10.

Children of God, the Franchises of which our unbaptized Children enjoy, as the uncircumcised Children of the believing Patriarchs before Abraham did, and as fully as yours, who are sprinkled, now do; and, indeed, *more fully*, more agreeable to the Nature of that *Liberty wherewith CHRIST has made us free*; for you, as the Jews did, endeavour to put a Yoke upon the Necks of your Children, *without* their Will and Consent; We leave ours to chuse for themselves, and (as our Lord exhorts) *to take His Yoke upon them* as their own Act and Deed, and so become *his willing People in the Day of His Power*. Where then lies the Guilt of this Disfranchisement you speak of? On us who leave our Children in the full Possession of all the Liberty the Covenant of Grace gives them? Or on you, who, as far as you can, bring your Children under the Bondage of the Covenant of Circumcision? This Remark will serve for an Answer to all you say (p. 21) about our *throwing Infants out of the Covenant, excluding them from its Blessings, &c. &c.* I, therefore, only add, That if the Want of Circumcision did not exclude the Seed of the Believing Patriarchs from the Blessings of the Covenant of Grace; how can the Want of Baptism exclude ours, to whom Baptism *now*, is no more a Divine Ordinance, than Circumcision was then to them? But the Case is, while you are reasoning about the Rights and Privileges of the Covenant of Grace, you are actually drawing all your Arguments and Conclusions from that of Circumcision, and the Jewish Church State, with which We and our Infants have nothing to do; the great Lawgiver himself having brought in and passed the *Bill of Exclusion* here. And, indeed, through the Whole you seem

to forget one material Point, viz. That Circumcision was *expresly* commanded; Baptism not. Tho' (p. 23) you tell us, "That the Silence of the New Testament, as to an *expres* Command for Infant Baptism, is far from an Argument against it." Then I would say, there is no Argument against the Cross in Baptism, or the Use of Oil, Spittle, &c. &c. And yet, I dare say, you think this Silence a very sufficient Argument against those human Inventions, though they prevailed very early in the Church.

As to little Children (p. 25) being brought to CHRIST, and his saying of *such is the Kingdom of Heaven*; supposing the Word (*ταυτα* such) to mean *Infants*; I readily grant that there are *such* even in the Kingdom of Glory, and many that were never baptized. However, *here* is nothing said about their Baptism. And as for our LORD's blessing them, we endeavour to follow his Example, by devoting our Children to God, imploring his Mercy for them, and doing every Thing you do, except sprinkling them in the Face, in the Name of the Sacred Three, for which we can find neither Command, Example, or even fair Scriptural Consequence in our Bibles.

You talk also of God's Covenant [*Mercy*] as the only Channel through which his Mercy flows. For my Part, I know of no Mercy of God, that is not Covenant Mercy. But then my Ideas of this Covenant are much more enlarged than yours; for I mean the Covenant of Grace in general, and as extending its Mercy to ALL dying in Infancy, baptized or not, even to those born of Heathen Parents: But you mean the particular Covenant made with *Abram*; or, if the Covenant of Grace, yet
you

you confine the Mercy of it to *Believers and their Offspring ONLY*; leaving the Millions dying in Infancy amongst the rest of the World, *without any Mercy at all*, Fewel for everlasting Burnings. An Idea, how shocking to Humanity! how dishonourable to the divine Perfections! And yet, so far as I can see, the necessary Consequence of *your* Notions of Covenant Mercy! And even amongst those who consider the Faith of the Parent as interesting the Child in *Covenant Mercy*, the doubting Christian must have many a painful Fear about the *Truth* of his Faith, and consequently of the Reality of his Child's Interest, especially if the Child should happen to die before Baptism; though one would think, that the Faith which gives a Right to the *Seal* of the Covenant, would give a Right to the *Mercy* of it. However, I confess, if my Child had no better Right to Covenant Mercy than *my* Faith could give it, or even Baptism itself, I should despair of its Salvation.

You say, (p. 26) "That Children have a Right to Baptism upon the professed Faith of their Parents." This is not Scripture Language; I do find there, that *Believers themselves*, upon Profession of their Faith, are entitled to Baptism; but not a Word of their entitling their *Children*, any more than their *Servants*, to it.

But here I am reminded of what you say about the Baptism of Households (p. 24.) It is to the last Degree astonishing, that so much Stress should be laid, by our Pædobaptist Brethren, on this Circumstance in the History of Baptism recorded in the Scriptures. As, at best, it is but *mere Supposition* that there were any Infants in any of the Households mentioned: And that Supposition

quite against the Spirit and Circumstances of the Account itself. It is said *Crispus* and all his House believed, and were baptized Acts xviii. 8. *The Word* was, it is said, spoken to the *Sailor*, and to all that were in his House, and who believed and rejoiced (v. 32.) The Household of *Stephanus*, 1 Cor. i. 16. 1 Cor. xvi. 15. *addicted themselves to the Ministry*. Is there, in these Instances then, any Thing to lead us to conclude, that there *must* be Infants in these Households? I confess I am surprized, that even Prejudice itself should lead any Man to conclude there *must*. Out of Reverence to Common Sense, therefore, were I a Pædobaptist, I would give up this Ground of Argument. Page 27, you desire us to consider Rom. xi. 16, 17, *about the Root being holy, and the Branches holy, &c.* as a strong Proof of *Fæderal Holiness*, and so of a Right to Baptism *. The Word *Holiness*, in Scripture, often signifies only a *Separation*, or *setting apart* for particular Purposes, such were the Jewish Nation, as a Nation, and so they are still considered by the Divine Providence, though so many of them are rejected as not the Spiritual Seed; but God has Mercy in Reserve for them as a People, and they shall be called, and brought to the Acknowledgement of CHRIST. And though at present the Gentiles are taken into the Christian Church; yet, says the Apostle, let them not be high-minded but fear; lest through *Unbelief* they be rejected also,

* In this Place, the Apostle speaks as a *Jew*, who considered every Thing as having a Kind of *Holiness* in it, that was set apart for any particular Purpose; and especially if it had but the most distant Respect to *Religion*; and so far even the Jewish Nation is still holy, though no longer considered as a Part of the visible Church of Christ.

though

though now apparently set apart from others, as God's peculiar People, &c. The Apostle is not here disputing about Baptism, or the Right of Infants to it; but about the Dispensations of Providence to the Jewish Nation, and the Mercy yet in Store for them; encouraging them to believe in CHRIST, and warning the Gentiles against too great Confidence in their Privileges, shewing them that they are nothing without a *persevering Faith in CHRIST*. Again you refer us to 1 Cor. vii. 14. about the *unbelieving Husband being sanctified by the believing Wife*, and so *making their Children holy*. Here, likewise, there is nothing said about Baptism, or that this Holiness, whatever it may be, gives a Right to it. And if the *Child* derives a Right to Baptism by *this Holiness* of the Parent, why should not the *unbelieving Parent* derive a Right to it by the believing one? There is, I should think, as much Reason for the one as the other*. The Apostle says elsewhere, that *every Thing is sanctified by the Word of God and Prayer*. And here, all he appears to mean is, that the unbelieving Parent was so far sanctified by the believing, as was necessary for the natural Ends of Marriage, and so as to denominate their Children *Christian Children*, and put them in the Way of being holy, i. e. de-

* It may be replied no, the Child could not act for it-self, the unbelieving Parent could. The Child is considered as Part of the Parent, and so necessarily included in the Covenant; the unbelieving Parent not so. I answer, it does not follow that because the Child could not act for it-self therefore it is included in the Covenant as a Part of the Parent. For however this may be the Case in some (not all) human Covenants, it does not follow it must be so in God's Covenant; or, admitting it does, this Interest can give no Right to Baptism (the Use and Benefit of which implies personal Faith) without express Appointment.

voted to God by Prayer, and instructed in the Christian Faith, as might the unbelieving Parent also. This is all that I can see the Apostle means. He points out no Right to Baptism in the one Case more than in the other; and encourages the Believer in his or her Endeavours, by the Possibility of Success;—*What knowest thou, O Wife, whether thou shalt save thy Husband, &c.* No other Holiness than this could the believing Parent impart to the unbelieving, or to their Children, as I can see; and, if not, what corroborating Proof of Infant Baptism is here?

As to what you have said (p. 26, 28) of *all Antiquity being against us*, though said with an Air of *absolute Assurance* (as it has been by many others) it has been refuted again and again. The *purest Antiquity*, which is that of the Apostolic Age, is entirely in *our Favour*, there being, in all that Time, not one Instance to be found, of the Baptism of Infants. And, indeed, this was the Case for at least nearly two Hundred Years afterwards. All the Records of Antiquity, after this Period, bear awful Testimony to the growing Corruptions of the Church, and to her nourishing in her Bosom the grossest Errors and Superstitions; and then it is that we first hear of *Infant Baptism*. If such Antiquity as this be of any Service to your Cause, you are very welcome to it. You have, indeed, referred us to *Irenæus*, and *Justin Martyr*, who both wrote in the Second Century; but in neither of these Authors is there any Thing to be found in Favour of that Practice. *Irenæus* uses the Word *Infants* in the Place referred to, but says nothing of their Baptism. He only speaks of their being re-
newed,

newed, or born again of CHRIST unto God *; but not of their being baptized by CHRIST or any one else. Justin Martyr, in his Apology, describes the Way and Manner of the Administration of Baptism with great Solemnity; and, according to the figurative Way of Expression usual in those Days, calls it being regenerated; but says not a Word of Infants; but on the contrary observes, that the Minds of those who learnt the Things he had been speaking of, were enlightened, and that he who is enlightened is washed, &c. † Tertullian, who lived near the Third Century, mentions Infant Baptism; but writes against it as an Innovation, in his Book, *de Baptismo* c. 18, and elsewhere. His Disciple, Cyprian, favours Infant Baptism, indeed; but at the same Time says, it is necessary that the Water be first consecrated by the Priest, and that the baptized should be anointed with the Oil of God, &c. ‡ The Testimony of this Father is as good in one Case as in the other, and therefore of no Advantage to you. I allow that Infant Baptism, was pretty general in Cyprian's Time, though then so lately introduced; and no Wonder, for the most superstitious Errors, when they happen to suit the vicious Prejudices of Man-

* Omnes, enim, venit per Scripturam Salvare omnes, inquam, qui per eum renascuntur in Deum, infantes, pueros, Juvenes, Seniores, &c. Iren. ad Hæren. l. 2. c. 39, or par. Ed. c. 32. 54.

† *ὅς ἐστι φαιδρύνειν τὴν ψυχὴν μαθῆναι καὶ φωτίζεσθαι αὐτήν.* Just. M. Apol. ii. p. 93, 94. Ed. Col.

The Passage in his 56th Question, sometimes produced in Favour of Infant Baptism, will appear upon Examination, nothing to the Purpose; and, indeed, these Questions themselves are thought by some learned Men to be spurious.

‡ Cyprian Ep. 70. Bp. of Oxford's Edit. 1682.

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kind, make an amazingly swift Progress in a very little Time. This accounts for the great Progress that Infant Baptism had made in the Third Century. But, considered in this Light, the Plea of Antiquity in its Favour appears to be a very poor one indeed.

And then as to the *Universality* of the Practice, and the *vast Numbers* you boast of, your Imagination, stimulated by your Prejudices, hath certainly led you beyond the *real Truth*. For, as already observed, there is no such Thing as Infant Baptism mentioned in the Apostolic History, nor for two Hundred Years after CHRIST. Thus far then the *Majority*, and that the most respectable of all, is against you. And the Ecclesiastical Historians will tell you, that there were *always considerable Numbers*, in every Age of the Church, after the Introduction of Infant Baptism, that opposed it strenuously. But, after all, what is this Boast of *Majority*? It was the Boast of the Scribes and Pharisees, and the main Body of the Jewish Nation, against JESUS CHRIST and his Disciples: It was the Boast of the whole Heathen World against the Christians; the Boast of the *Papists* against the *Protestants*, at the Reformation, and even to this Day. This Kind of Argument is usually the last Shift of a baffled Pleader in a wrong Cause, and as such I freely give it up to you. But you will tell me *your Majority* consisteth of Men of the most respectable Characters, and celebrated for their Learning and Piety, and that it would be *strange indeed, and exceedingly harsh to suppose, that such Men of God should be led blindfold in Error*. I ask, is it any Way strange, that fallible Men, such as the best are, since the Days of extraordinary Inspiration, should mistake
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in Points not essential to Salvation, while the present Darkness of the human Mind, and the Influence that the Prejudices of Education must naturally have upon it, continue? It would be stranger if they did not. This teaches us, to watch carefully against those Prejudices; to keep close to the Light of God's Word, and beware of relying too much on our own Reasonings in Points that depend entirely upon Divine Revelation. Young Men are apt to be dazzled with the Glare of popular Opinions; and are easily persuaded, that what they have been used to consider as true, must necessarily be so; but, if they are open to Conviction, longer Life, farther Enquiry, and more Experience will lead them to correct many Mistakes; and teach them to adhere to Truth itself, with more Modesty and Distrust of their own Judgment; especially where they see even wise and good Men differ. I have found it thus myself; and have been credibly informed, that eminently good and great Man Dr. WATTS, sometime before he died, saw his Mistake on this Subject, and owned, *that Infant Baptism was indefensible*; And the learned and honest Mr. WHISTON, publicly professed himself a *Baptist*. In a Word, these Things teach us to expect different Opinions in Religion; to maintain our own with Moderation, and to treat all others with true Christian Candour and Charity.

I am, REVEREND SIR,

Your sincere Friend,

And affectionate Brother,

D. TURNER.

Abingdon, May 11, 1782.

P O S T S C R I P T

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IF Circumcision be not merely a *political*, but an *ecclesiastical* Institution, (which is a Question) yet it certainly was peculiar to the *Abrahamic*, or *Jewish* Church, as a particular *NATIONAL* Church, and not applicable to the Church in general; consequently, to make Christian Baptism to come properly in the Room of Circumcision, as you say it does, the Christian Church ought also to be *NATIONAL*, and not *Congregational*, as the *Dissenting Churches* amongst us are; and Baptism administered to all the Infants born in it, without any Regard to the *Sincerity* of the Faith, or the *Purity* of the Morals of the Parents, as Circumcision was. And, indeed, if we must make the *Jewish Church* the Model of the Christian, so far as to put Baptism in the Room of Circumcision; I see not why we may not go still farther, and not only make the Christian Church *National*, but also admit the *Ecclesiastical Orders* of *Bishops*, *Priests*, and *Deacons*, in the Room of the *Jewish High Priest*, *Priests*, and *Levites*. This would be more consistent; especially, if, in the Room of the *Traditionary Authority* of the *Elders*, the Church were allowed to be possessed of the *Power of decreeing Rules and Ceremonies*. We should then have some *Shadow* of a *Place* for *Infant Baptism*, and even *Sprinkling*, as a *reasonable*, though not as a *Scriptural Service*; whereas, on your Plan, we have not even that *Shadow*, as I can perceive. A *Dissenting-Congregational-Paedobaptist*, seems to me an awkward, inconsistent Kind of Character: To avoid this, you must either come over to us, or conform to the Church of England, which is formed more entirely on the Plan of the *Jewish Church* than yours, and whose *Infant Baptism* resteth upon Principles much more consistent than yours.

Your sincere Friend,

And affectionate Brother,

D. TURNER.

London, May 11. 1782.

